

COUNTY GENERAL SERVICES Support of Detention Facilities

SYNOPSIS

During the course of the Grand Jury's tours of the seven major detention facilities in San Diego County, a consistent complaint surfaced. Those complaints concerned matters of maintenance, the untimely accomplishment of corrective maintenance, and associated budget accountability. The Jury's investigation concentrated on issues of communication and accountability between San Diego County General Services (GSA) and the San Diego County Sheriff's Office (SDSO).

Though all the Sheriff's detention facilities were visited, this report focuses on maintenance concerns at the Vista Detention Facility, the East Mesa Detention Facility, and Las Colinas. The Grand Jury recommends that GSA provide the Sheriff's Department with a jointly agreeable and user friendly maintenance planning and tracking system. Additionally, the Jury recommends that GSA and the Sheriff's Office work jointly for timely data entry, regular reporting of budget progress, a system-wide assessment of maintenance needs, clarity and agreement of the current status of facilities, and development of annual maintenance plans.

ISSUES

During the course of tours of inspection at the Detention Facilities, persistent complaints surfaced regarding the quality of response and the timeliness of action by General Services to maintenance issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Jury first visited the Vista Detention Facility in October 2001. At that time a number of necessary maintenance needs were observed, such as repairs to a classroom, to the reception room, and to the dry food storage area. A follow-up visit was made in March 2002. A needed roof replacement had been completed, but the work order for the roof did not include the reception area. The roof in the reception area still leaked, thus causing the electric doors, installed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to become water damaged and not work properly. Those doors were replaced at considerable expense, without first repairing the leak which caused the original damage.

The walls in the reception room were also water damaged, and in the week before the inspection by the Board of Corrections, the swollen wall tiles were scraped and painted without repairing the original leak.

During the Jury's visit to the East Mesa Detention Facility in January 2001, the Captain (who had been in charge for two years) complained that maintenance was very poor. He said the problem has existed for years and doesn't seem to be showing any improvement. A repair request must survive a series of bureaucratic processes involving work orders, soliciting contract bids, assignments and reshuffling on priority lists, project managers, and letting to subcontractors. At any point along that continuum, the request can be interrupted, changed, delayed, or lost. The Captain indicated that it was difficult to get through GSA's bureaucratic maze. Further, that temporary fixes were often listed as permanent repairs and that many of the repairs were, in his opinion, substandard.

Las Colinas Detention Facility is the oldest, having the most significant maintenance needs. The Captain noted that there is a need for constant attention to the functioning of the physical plant. Even though there are four GSA workers permanently assigned to Las Colinas, he says they can barely keep up with emergency maintenance. The intercom, a critical system in the maximum security unit, had been non-functional since July 2001. The GSA advised the Captain that parts were no longer available due to the age of the units, and yet GSA was vague as to when the system would be replaced.

Each detention facility has 1-4 permanent maintenance staff assigned to it. Both sheriffs and probation officers are unanimously satisfied with the building maintenance workers assigned to their institutions, but complain that there are too few of them. In adult facilities, innovative and creative sheriff personnel can recruit help from skilled inmates. However, this option is not available in juvenile facilities due to restrictions and laws prohibiting use of juveniles as an in-house work force.

Sheriff and probation personnel responsible for maintenance and repair orders complain that they find it difficult to use the computer program called SPAN, which is used by GSA to schedule work, set completion dates, and allocate funding. According to the Sheriff, SPAN is not efficient or informative, nor does it permit easy customer access. GSA says that deputies use "clipboards and pens," implying a lack of computer literacy. On the contrary, the Jury found the deputies assigned to deal with GSA to be highly competent and generally computer literate. During several meetings with GSA personnel, the attitude of lack of regard for the "customer" was apparent.

A major concern of all the captains was budget allocation. There appears to be little clarity in understanding the status of each detention facility's individual budget. Money is placed into each facility's account based upon the square footage occupied by the facility. Some of the money is for preventive maintenance and some for discretionary maintenance, as identified by maintenance supervisors, but it's unclear how much is to go for what repair or replacement.

According to a Vista Jail response to a 2000/01 Grand Jury report, that facility had requested a copy of the "comprehensive preventative maintenance plan," but as of this report none has been provided. There was no comprehensive plan at that time (February, 2001), nor when this Grand Jury visited in October 2001. Information was being entered into the SPAN-FN (Facility Center) computer system regarding maintenance that needed to be done, but no plan existed. Any "plan" from GSA has been assembled subsequent to this Grand Jury visit.

Vista Jail reports the most common maintenance problems are locks, plumbing and lights. There has been no plan to address the likelihood of future breakdowns and insufficient staffing to implement any plan that is created. The building staff permanently assigned to this jail by GSA is unable to keep up with repairs of equipment breakages or provide adequate preventive maintenance.

According to the deputies assigned to maintenance, GSA does not provide any documents or written materials explaining what will be paid for each repair or from which budget the money will come. GSA says that deputies should access the SPAN program to obtain information about the progress of each job order and each facility's budget status. Sheriff personnel claim that GSA does not respond to their requests for an accounting of what money is being used for what repairs, nor does GSA provide them with an account balance for their facilities. Unfortunately, data entry by both GSA and the deputies is not timely, thus making current information unavailable to any party. Consequently, few sheriff maintenance supervisors use the SPAN system for that purpose.

Another major problem, according to the deputies, is that they have no input in the selection of subcontractors, often resulting in the choice of a more expensive, less competent contractor. While they do not ask to be directly involved in the selection of subcontractor, they insist that they often have knowledge of local subcontractors who could be utilized to considerable financial advantage by GSA. The monies to pay these contractors comes from each facility's GSA maintenance budget.

The Jury found that water leaks have caused major problems in nearly every facility, and most have not been resolved properly. Repairs too often are cosmetic, just enough to satisfy an impending inspection, rather than being systemically corrected.

The majority of sheriff personnel suggest site management of maintenance as a way to resolve budget and competency issues. They point to the Orange County model as the most desirable. Because of financial problems experienced by that county, its GSA was eliminated and their Sheriffs deal directly with trades people and administer their own department budget. Absent GSA, they say that maintenance needs have been accomplished with cost efficiency and cost effectiveness. With regard to the San Diego Sheriff's contract with this County's GSA, there are no standards allowing a dissatisfied customer (Sheriff) to remedy performance shortfalls, and there is no way the Sheriff can participate in the choice of contractors.

GSA claims that its SPAN program contains a computerized maintenance plan for the County. Yet, several captains complain that despite repeated requests, they have been unable to obtain a copy of such a plan. They would like to see if such plans are relevant and fair to their facilities. Additionally, several captains have been unable to receive an accounting of maintenance hours and money already funded, one saying that he remains unconvinced that the level of service already paid for is being provided. GSA says some of the delay in making plans available is lack of timely data entry and understaffing.

Finally, the deputies dispute the responses of GSA to the findings of previous Grand Juries. In fact, the deficiencies described in 2000-2001 Grand Jury recommendations 55, 56, and 57 have still not been repaired, despite GSA's response that those repairs have been completed. According to most deputies and captains interviewed, any preventative maintenance program exists only on paper, not in actuality.

PROCEDURES EMPLOYED

All information contained herein was obtained during visits to and interviews with supervisory personnel at Vista, Las Colinas, and East Mesa detention facilities.

FACTS

- A. There is no contact person at GSA designated to assist supervising sheriffs in tracking the progress of their job(s) or the status of their budget.¹

FINDINGS

¹ Grand Jury interviews with detention facility captains.

- I. GSA met with the Grand Jury and dismissed the sheriffs' concerns and denied the validity of their complaints.
- II. Dissatisfaction appears to be partly the result of the lack of a budget tracking process so that managers can allocate their resources.
- III. Meaningful communication is lacking due to GSA's complex and inaccessible automated maintenance program.
- IV. The level of dissatisfaction with GSA is unchanged, year-to-year, as evidenced by reading prior Grand Jury reports.²
- V. GSA's response and service to Sheriff complaints are not timely, are simplistic and dismissive.³
- VI. Meaningful communication is lacking between GSA and SDSO.⁴
- VII. Financial accountability is questionable. There is no known program defining the maintenance budget in terms of amounts spent, for what purpose amounts were spent, and the balance available to each facility.⁵
- VIII. The computerized tracking program used by GSA is not easily accessible by operating systems used by SDSO. Moreover, the data entries on repairs and budget are not kept current.⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

That San Diego County Department of General Services:

- 02-31:** Provide for a computerized tracking system for maintenance planning and tracking accessible to both the provider (GSA) and the user (Sheriff).

² Prior Grand Jury reports.

³ Meeting with GSA and capital improvement documents.

⁴ Grand Jury interviews with captains and maintenance supervisors.

⁵ Grand Jury interviews with maintenance deputies.

⁶ Grand Jury interviews with maintenance deputies.

That San Diego County Sheriff's Department and Department of General Services:

- 02-32:** Adopt a joint protocol for timely entry of maintenance budget data and regular reporting of progress.
- 02-33:** Conduct a joint, system-wide assessment of maintenance needs, to establish a base line, agreed to by all, about the current status of facilities.
- 02-34:** Develop future annual maintenance plans jointly through a partnership between GSA and Sheriff's personnel.

REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

The California Penal Code §933(c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. Such comment shall be made *no later than 90 days* after the Grand Jury publishes its report (filed with the Clerk of the Court); except that in the case of a report containing findings and recommendations pertaining to a department or agency headed by an elected County official (e.g. District Attorney, Sheriff, etc.), such comment shall be made *within 60 days* to the Presiding Judge with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Furthermore, California Penal Code §933.05(a), (b), (c), details, as follows, the manner in which such comment(s) are to be made:

- (a) As to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
 - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding
 - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
 - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an

analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

- (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) If a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with the Penal Code §933.05 are required by the date indicated:

RESPONDING AGENCY	RECOMMENDATIONS	DATE
San Diego County Department of General Services	02-31 through 02-34	08/28/02
San Diego County Sheriff's Department	02-32 through 02-34	07/29/02

